converted to analog form by a digital-to-analog converter and amplified in an output stage. The tuner and metronome functions are generated within the digital signal processor.

In the Claims:

All pending claims are set forth below for the convenience of the Examiner, with new and amended claims so indicated. Attachment 2 indicates changes made to amended claims, with additions underlined and deletions struck through.

1. A musical instrument comprising:

an elongated unitary neck and body adapted for stringed play;

at least one support arm coupled to the unitary neck and body and extending to at least one side thereof; and

at least one side panel coupled to the support arm.

2. The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein said instrument is a guitar.

3. (Amended) The guitar according to claim 2 wherein a heel is provided at a junction of the unitary neck and body.

4. (Amended) The guitar according to claim 3 wherein a heel plate corresponding to a like segment of a side of a resonating body of an acoustic guitar of conventional design is affixed to the heel or is received within a slot provided within the heel.

5. The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the support arm is releasably coupled to the unitary neck and body and the side panel is releasably coupled to the support arm.

6. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the support arm extends to a first side and a second side of the unitary neck and body and wherein the support arm is coupled at each of its ends to a side panel corresponding to a segment of one of at least two opposing sides of a resonating body of an acoustic instrument of conventional design.

7. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the side panel comprises a curved panel corresponding to a segment of a side of a resonating body of an acoustic instrument of conventional design, which panel is provided with an edge corresponding to a contiguous portion of a top face of the resonating body of said conventionally designed instrument.

8. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the side panel comprises a curved panel corresponding to a segment of a side of a resonating body of an acoustic instrument of conventional design, which panel is provided with an edge corresponding to a contiguous portion of a bottom face of the resonating body of said conventionally designed instrument.

9. (Amended) A musical instrument according to claim 6, wherein:

the support arm is releasably coupled to the unitary neck and body;

a first side panel is releasably coupled to the support arm at a first end of said support arm; and

a second side panel is releasably coupled to the support arm at a second end of said support arm.

10. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 9 wherein a bottom brace is releasably coupled between bottoms of opposing side panels.

11. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the adaptation for stringed play includes a string tensioning system rigidly coupled to the underside of the unitary neck and body.

12. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 11 wherein the string tensioning system is spaced apart from the unitary neck and body.

13. The musical instrument according to claim 11 wherein the string-path reverser is disposed at the proximal end of the body to guide the strings over the end of the body and to the string tensioning system.

14. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein adaptation for stringed play is provided by the addition of:

a fingerboard;

a string tie block for securing strings near a distal end of the unitary neck and body;

a nut, disposed proximal to the tie block, for determining the distal end of the active portions of the strings;

a slotted bridge, affixed to a top of a proximal end of the unitary neck and body;

a saddle received within a bridge slot of the slotted bridge; and

an acousto-electric transducer for conversion of string vibrations to electrical waves suitable for electronic amplification and sound reproduction.

15. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 14 wherein the acoustic-to-electric transducer is a piezoelectric pickup received within the bridge slot under the saddle.

16. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 15 further including a strip of compliant material disposed between the saddle and the pickup or between the pickup and the bottom of the bridge slot.

17. The musical instrument according to claim 14 wherein the slotted bridge further includes a string guide proximal to the bridge slot to constrain the strings to spaced apart paths.

18. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 11 wherein the support arm is coupled to the unitary neck and body by a releasable attachment to a distal end of the string tensioning system.

19. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 6 wherein a coupler by which the support arm is releasably coupled to the side panel comprises:

a block affixed to an inner surface of the side panel, said block provided with a captive nut accessible at its surface and a thumbscrew partially engaged with said nut; and

a keyhole-shaped aperture in the support arm wherein one end of the keyhole is adapted to received a head of the thumbscrew and the other to receive a threaded shank of the thumbscrew.

20. The musical instrument according to claim 13 wherein the string-path reverser comprises a plurality of pulleys or rollers on a common axle and secured within a frame.

21. A method of configuring for use a stringed musical instrument comprising at least a unitary neck and body, two side panels, and at least one support arm, comprising the steps of:

coupling the support arm to the unitary neck and body;

coupling a first side panel to a first end of the support arm; and

coupling a second side panel to a second end of the support arm.

22. (Amended) A method of configuring for use the musical instrument of claim 21, comprising the steps of claim 21 and the additional steps of coupling a first end of a bottom brace to a bottom end of the first side panel and coupling a second end of said bottom brace to a bottom of the second side panel.

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23. (Amended) A musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein:

a first support arm is pivotally coupled to and disposed on a first side of the unitary neck and body and is releasably coupled to a first side panel; and

a second support arm is pivotally coupled to and disposed on a second side of the unitary neck and body and is releasably coupled to a second side panel.

24. (Amended) The musical instrument according to claim 23 further including:

rotational stops to establish a deployed position of each support arm; and

a tensioning bottom-closure device which, when connected between bottom sections of the first and second side panels, applies a force between the first and second side panels that is reflected to the pivoting support arms, holding the pivoting support arms against their respective rotational stops.

25. A method of configuring for use a stringed musical instrument comprising at least a unitary neck and body, two side panels, and a first and second support arm pivotally coupled to the unitary neck and body, comprising the steps of:

moving the first and second support arms from their stowed positions to their deployed positions;

coupling a first side panel to a first support arm; and

coupling a second side panel to a second support arm.

26. A method of configuring for use the musical instrument of claim 25, comprising the steps of claim 25 and the additional steps of coupling a first end of a tensioning bottom-closure device to the bottom end of a first side panel and coupling the opposite end of said bottom-closure device to the bottom of a second side panel.

27. A musical instrument according to claim 1 wherein the support arm is pivotally coupled at a first end to the unitary neck and body and pivotally coupled at a second end to a side panel, so as to permit the side panel to be deployed for use or drawn close to the unitary neck and body for storage.

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28. A stringed musical instrument lacking a resonant body, which instrument incorporates an acousto-electric transducer and electronic signal processing circuits for amplification of the signals and for alteration of their temporal and spectral characteristics in a manner that approximates the effect of a resonant body.

29. The stringed musical instrument according to claim 28 wherein the electronic signal processing circuits include a plurality of filters the outputs of which are summed.

30. The stringed musical instrument according to claim 29 wherein at least one of the filters is a band-pass filter.

Please cancel claims 31-33, without prejudice.

Please add the following claims:

--34. (New) The musical instrument of claim 1, further comprising:

an acousto-electric transducer for converting mechanical energy from vibrating strings of the musical instrument into electrical signals; and

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at least one electronic signal processing circuit for processing the electrical signals to produce for a listener the sensation that sounds produced by the vibrating strings are arriving from a location of the musical instrument.

35. (New) The musical instrument of claim 1, further comprising a device that simulates visually a sound hole.